

In the Matter of )  
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 Digital Television Distributed ) MB Docket No. 05-312  
 Transmission System Technologies )  
 )

COMMENTS OF SUNBELT TELEVISION, INC.

As licensee of full service television station KHIZ (TV) in a market that includes uneven terrain, Sunbelt fully supports the Commission's decision to authorize the use of digital transmission system ("DTS") technologies to enable broadcasters to provide primary service to their authorized coverage areas. Sunbelt submits that the Commission also should adopt rules that would provide DTV licensees flexibility to use DTS technologies to serve their entire designated market areas (DMAs), subject to the conditions that the stations adhere to applicable interference limits and serve their community of license with the requisite quality grade of signal.

DTS technologies can play a significant role in allowing stations such as KHIZ (TV), Barstow, California, to successfully navigate the transition to digital television. In areas of

<sup>1</sup> The *Notice* was part of *Clarification Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, MB Docket No. 05-312, FCC 05-192, 20 FCC Rcd 17797 (2005).

irregular terrain such as those served by Sunbelt, DTS technologies will greatly facilitate the provision of a good quality signal to more portions of Sunbelt's service area. Because DTS allows broadcasters to deliver signals to consumer residences from multiple directions, the likelihood of a stronger, viewable signal being received throughout the home is greatly increased, especially in areas of uneven terrain and at what otherwise would be the edge of the station's service area. As the Commission explained, each DTS transmitter would broadcast the station's DTV signal on the same channel, relying on the "adaptive equalizer" circuitry in DTV receivers to cancel or combine the multiple signals to produce a single signal.<sup>2</sup>

While increasing the likelihood of good indoor reception, the use of DTV technologies also will reduce overall interference. Because DTS transmitters typically require much lower power levels, they should produce significantly less overall interference than maximized, single-transmitter operations.

Sunbelt supports the Commission's proposal to grant primary status to DTS transmitters used to serve a DTV station's authorized service area. Primary status within a DTV station's authorized service area serves the public interest because DTS transmitters will allow stations subject to terrain obstructions to reach populations within their authorized service areas that otherwise are not reachable by a single transmitter. Those populations otherwise may be compelled to subscribe to cable or satellite service at substantial expense just to receive its local broadcaster's signal.

Sunbelt further supports the Commission's proposal to allow a DTS transmitter to serve the station's community of license. The basis of the Commission's broadcast allocation model is service to the community of license combined with non-interference to other

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<sup>2</sup> Notice at ¶ 2.

allocations. Every station that is licensed to a community has been obligated to provide a quality signal that covers its community of licenses. Sunbelt commends the Commission for proposing to allow licensees to utilize DTS technologies to meet that goal.

Specifically, Sunbelt supports the Commission's proposal that at least one of the licensee's DTS transmitters provide coverage of the station's community of license in accordance with Section 73.625 of the rules.<sup>3</sup> Under such a rule, the community of license would receive the exact same service that it received under the Commission's current rules, so that it would be unlikely that any viewers in the community of license would notice any change in service. Indeed, the community of license might receive better service than from the existing analog facility because DTS systems can employ more precise transmitters than main facilities. The Commission's proposal appropriately would provide licensees the flexibility to provide service to their communities of license and markets in the best way they see fit, so long as they meet the Commission's community coverage and interference requirements.

Sunbelt, however, opposes the Commission's proposal to limit stations utilizing DTS to providing service only to the same area that they are authorized to serve with a single transmitter.<sup>4</sup> Sunbelt submits that once the DTV transition has ended, broadcasters using DTS should be permitted to expand their service areas to cover their entire DMA. The DMA is the real financial market of a television station. Some stations, such as Sunbelt's KHIZ, are licensed to communities that are far from the geographic center of the market, but nonetheless clearly are part of it and subject to all of its competitive pressures. By permitting a station the flexibility to

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 20

compete as effectively as possible in its DMA, the Commission will free stations to earn the revenues and resources required to provide competitive local service.<sup>5</sup>

For example, Sunbelt currently is faced with paying Los Angeles DMA costs without the opportunity to earn Los Angeles DMA revenues because of coverage difficulties in several portions of the Los Angeles viewing market. This prevents the station from competing fairly in its own market. Specifically, Sunbelt needs to compete with other Los Angeles DMA stations for staff, talent, and programming. Similarly, the station needs to compete with other Los Angeles stations for advertising revenue. Yet when the advertisers look at the comparative coverage of stations in the market, KHIZ(TV) is put at a distinct disadvantage by its signal coverage difficulties. Should the Commission adopt Sunbelt's proposal, however, KHIZ-DT will be able to compete on a more equal footing with the other stations in the DMA. Permitting DTS coverage throughout a DMA also would allow a station to provide over-the-air service to the significant percentage of households in a given DMA that do not subscribe to multichannel video program distributors. Moreover, by adopting its proposed rules to prevent "cherry-picking" (withdrawing service from less populated or less affluent areas in order to serve more populated or more affluent areas),<sup>6</sup> the Commission can prevent stations that utilize DTS from abandoning existing viewers.

Finally, Sunbelt similarly recommends that the Commission authorize a full-power DTV station to utilize digital boosters to enhance the station's service. By adopting a

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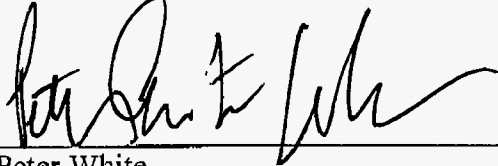
<sup>5</sup> Sunbelt submits that in order to provide effective service, DTS transmitters in the DMA should be authorized on a primary basis. At a minimum, however, DTS transmitters throughout the entire DMA should be permitted on a secondary basis. The public interest is not served by limiting DTS service as the Commission has proposed.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at ¶ 28.

combination of flexible DTS and digital booster rules, the Commission would both promote local broadcast service and foster increased diversity and competition within the DMA.

Respectfully submitted,

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February 6, 2006